

American

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U.N. Sanctions Against Iran Would Target Revolutionary Guard

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States wants the Middle East ultimately to be free of nuclear arms, and while the Obama administration remains open to engagement with Iran, it is working with others in the international community on economic sanctions to discourage the Iranian government from pursuing those weapons.

"We are still hoping that Iran will decide to forgo any nuclear ambitions for nuclear weapons, and begin to respect its own people more on a daily basis," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said February 15. "But we cannot just keep hoping for that. We have to work to take action to try to convince the Iranian government not to pursue nuclear weapons."

Clinton was speaking to students at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar at a "Townterview" moderated by Al Jazeera satellite television.

In her remarks, she mentioned the September 2009 revelation that Iran had a secret nuclear facility at Qom, the Iranian government's refusal of an international offer to enrich uranium for civilian use, and its recent decision to begin enriching uranium to 20 percent, a level Clinton described as "troubling."

"I wish that Iran would take a different approach," she said. "The United States under President Obama would really welcome a positive, normal relationship with Iran. But you can't do that unless there is something coming back to you. And there hasn't been."

The Obama administration is working with others in the international community to apply pressure on Iran through United Nations sanctions that "will be particularly aimed at those enterprises controlled by the Revolutionary Guard," which she said is supplanting the Iranian government, including its supreme leader, president and parliament.

"Iran is moving toward a military dictatorship," Clinton warned.

On February 10, the Obama administration targeted existing U.S. sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) against one of its corporate entities, Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, and its commander, Rostam Qasemi, who is also a general in the IRGC.

Clinton called upon the rest of the world to unite and

send an "unequivocal message" that it "will not stand idly by" as Iran pursues a nuclear program that can threaten others in the region and beyond.

"Our goal, eventually, is to have a Middle East free of nuclear weapons," she said. President Obama has said he wants to eliminate nuclear weapons from all over the world. The United States is currently negotiating with Russia to reduce its own arsenal "because we are very committed to demonstrating ... the importance that we place on this goal," Clinton said.

She said leaders and influential people from the broader Middle East have expressed their concerns over a nuclear-armed Iran, and their need to respond if that scenario becomes a reality.

"That's not something that they want to spend their money on, that they want to be involved in. But, on the other hand, they don't want to live in a region where they feel threatened," she said.

The Obama administration's emphasis on nonproliferation is also manifest in its determination to prevent violent extremists such as al-Qaida from obtaining nuclear material to make a bomb.

"This is not the Cold War. In the Cold War the feeling was that you could deter each other," she said. "When you have people who are willing to kill themselves, and kill many others at the same time, that upsets the balance."

The secretary also discussed ongoing U.S. efforts to urge Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table to reach a peace agreement and establish an independent Palestinian state based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed land swaps.

"No one can dictate to either the Israelis or the Palestinians what the outcome should be. They must make those decisions themselves. But the United States is very focused on being a facilitator and a help in every way possible to achieve that outcome," she said.

She described the situation in Gaza as "a humanitarian crisis." The Obama administration has contributed "many, many hundreds of millions of dollars" to assist Palestinians there, as well as to encourage more aid and materials to be allowed in.

"We have begun to deal with the immediate necessities of food and medical supplies. But we need housing for people to live in. We need hospitals rebuilt. We need schools that can function and provide an education. And we are continuing to push very hard for that to be realized," she said.

But she repeated calls for Hamas, which controls Gaza, to renounce violence, recognize Israel, and to "be part of the solution, going forward."

On Iraq, the secretary said she is pleased with the progress the country is making as U.S. combat troops are on schedule to withdraw from the country by August.

The people of Iraq have a democratically elected government and are exercising control over their natural resources. The United States hopes that Iraq will remain a democratic and pluralistic society "where every part of the country gets to participate, that there isn't any tilting of power for or against any group within Iraq," she said.

As part of their democratic future, "the Iraqi people will have the benefit of their oil revenues. Not one group, not any individual," she said, and they can choose to invest the revenues in education, health care, housing and other areas that will benefit the larger society.

"That is what we hope for them, and that is the direction that the Iraqi government seems to be headed," she said.

Secretary Clinton Cites Mutual Respect and Shared Values with Muslim World

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton renewed President Obama's call for a "new beginning" in relations between the United States and Muslim communities, as she urged a cooperative focus on common challenges and goals.

Speaking at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum in Doha, Qatar, February 14, Clinton said the Obama administration has "worked to alter the tone and deepen the substance of our relationships with people from all regions and all backgrounds" during its first year in office. The new U.S. approach rests on the three core pillars of "mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual responsibility; a shared commitment to universal values; and broad engagement with governments and citizens alike," she said.

Clinton said the message of President Obama's June 4, 2009, speech in Cairo remains vital in encouraging open dialogue and equal partnership.

"Building a stronger relationship cannot happen overnight or even in a year. It takes patience, persistence and hard work from all of us ... to take responsibility for retiring stereotypes and outdated views and for bringing a renewed sense of cooperation," she said.

The United States shares the values, hopes and ambitions

that all hold "as mothers and fathers, students and workers, business leaders and social advocates, and members of the human family," she said.

Democratic reform is a critical element of progress in modern societies, Clinton said, and those who have a say in the decisions that affect their own lives, and who can freely access information and express their views, are in the best position to fulfill their potential, which will also serve the interests of their country.

In addition, "women's rights and national progress go hand in hand," she said. "No country can achieve its full potential when half the population is left out or left behind."

The secretary said violence against women "is not cultural. It is criminal." She called for religious leaders to take a stand against practices such as honor killings, child marriages, and domestic and gender-based violence.

Violent extremism remains a threat to Muslim countries as well as the United States, Clinton said. "True and lasting security takes root in places where people have the opportunity to find jobs, to be educated, to raise healthy families, and benefit from the scientific and technological breakthroughs."

The Obama administration believes that "education and innovation are the currency of this century," and is working to expand educational opportunities, support entrepreneurs in the Muslim world through programs such as the Global Technology and Innovation Fund, and promote advances and exchanges in science and technology.

"Our goal is to identify excellent ideas and successful projects in Muslim communities and then invest in them, help to scale them up, and to connect innovators and entrepreneurs so they can support and enhance each other's work," she said.

The United States shares the view of Islamic leaders and community members who are outraged at "those who claim to kill in the name of God," and, Clinton said, "we are determined to prevent extremists from driving wedges between Muslims and non-Muslims — in America or anywhere."

"Islam is — and must be — an important part of the solution in confronting violent extremism," she said.

On February 13, President Obama announced that White House staff member Rashad Hussain has been appointed as his special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Hussain will focus on mutual interests between the United States and Muslim communities such

as education, entrepreneurship, science and technology, health issues such as eradicating polio, and opposition to violent extremism.

"As an accomplished lawyer and a close and trusted member of my White House staff, Rashad has played a key role in developing the partnerships I called for in Cairo," Obama told conference attendees in Doha through a video address.

The president acknowledged that realizing the goals he outlined in his speech "will take a long-term commitment," but in the eight months since his remarks "I believe we've laid the groundwork to turn those pledges into action."

Senator John Kerry, chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told the U.S.-Islamic World Forum February 13 that President Obama's speech in Cairo and subsequent U.S. actions mark "the beginning of a long road."

"Today, we are in a fundamentally better place than we were a year ago," Kerry said. "Quiet accomplishments and new attitudes and policies have put our partnerships on firmer footing."

Americans recognize the need for deeper understanding and reject the demonization of Islam, he said. "Our values and our history remind us constantly that religious bigotry — whether it is anti-Semitism or Islamophobia — has no place in our public life."

There is also "serious debate ... underway within Muslim communities over how best to address extremism and combat prejudice," the senator said. He praised Jordan's King Abdullah II for promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue through his "A Common Word" initiative, as well as dialogue efforts by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and the OIC conference itself, which is being hosted by Qatar.

Kerry also said Obama has worked to increase educational and science exchanges between the United States and Muslims around the world in order to promote people-to-people relationships.

USAID Chief on Haiti's Humanitarian Crisis, One Month Later

Huffington Post article by Rajiv Shah on challenges that remain in Haiti

In an article in the February 12 Huffington Post, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah highlights the challenges that remain in Haiti one month after the devastating earthquake struck. The text follows:

One Month Later, Haiti's Humanitarian Crisis Remains

By Dr. Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator

One month ago, a devastating earthquake struck Haiti.

In the hours that followed, President Obama gathered his senior leadership and gave a clear directive: respond quickly and overcome any obstacles that stand in the way. We used the lessons we learned from past disasters, and we did not allow red tape to be an excuse for inaction. With the unparalleled mobility of assets of the U.S. military to support them, countless civilian government agencies began working around the clock through USAID, with the United Nations and in partnership with the Government of Haiti and more than 400 non-governmental organizations to reach as many people as humanly possible with food, water, shelter, and medical help.

The President's mandate has not been easy to fulfill and Haiti's humanitarian crisis is far from over. The devastation wreaked by the earthquake is horrific. What infrastructure existed before the earthquake has been badly damaged -- roads, ports and power grids were either buried or destroyed. The Government of Haiti's capacity, in terms of both human resources and physical infrastructure, cannot be rebuilt over night. Their losses are too great, but in spite of the circumstances they face, Haitians have taken the lead in determining the future of their nation. The greatest loss, the human toll of this disaster, will never leave the memories of the families and aid workers who have struggled to save them.

Our primary objective in those early days was to save as many lives as we could. Search and rescue teams from throughout the U.S. were on the ground within 24 hours, working with the Government of Haiti and international search and rescue teams that were trained by USAID. More than 130 lives were saved, ranging from a 3-week-old baby to an 84-year-old woman. It did not matter if Americans were rescuing Haitians, or French rescuers were saving Americans -- we were all on the same team.

This spirit of cooperation continues. The Government of Haiti sets the priorities. Partners answer their call, helping to meet not only the urgent need, but also to support Haiti's long-term development. U.S. medical teams alone have treated more than 30,000 injured. Local water distribution businesses -- the traditional means by which Haitians receive water -- were recruited immediately to help sustain the population. Thousands of Haitians are employed in jobs programs to help clear rubble and build shelter for displaced families.

Despite the human challenges, we are working with the Haitian people and their leaders to focus on tomorrow, even as we face enormous challenges. Efficient operations

at food distribution points are allowing us to feed more people on a regular basis, but still, too many go hungry. Together with our international partners, we are providing Haitians with the tools and materials to construct temporary shelters to protect them in the rainy season, but Haiti's already fragile natural environment is now even more vulnerable to the rains, floods and hurricanes. The ability to care for those recovering from injury is increasing, and monitoring for potential for outbreak of disease is constant; but even in the best of conditions, temporary settlements make the public health threat very real.

With this sense of urgency, the United States will continue to work tirelessly with Haiti and our international partners to identify where each country can best contribute, in order to to alleviate this humanitarian crisis and lay the foundation for future Haitian development that reduces the impact such disasters have on Haiti's population. American citizens echoed this commitment. Nearly half of all American families have donated to the Haiti relief effort through efforts such as the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund.

It may be tempting to think that building back better is impossible. We cannot fool ourselves about the magnitude of the challenges. Nonetheless, when we have the power to prevent hunger and disease from robbing a generation of children of their capacity to live up to their potential through basic nutrition and immunization programs, we cannot stand idly by. When American workers can help train Haitian construction firms how to build safe homes, the opportunities are too great to ignore.

The Haitian spirit is brave and resilient. When I walked through a settlement in Port-au-Prince of families that had lost everything, I spotted 12 volt batteries and power strips people had found to keep their cell phones charged. Their priority was to reach out to family and friends and offer what little help they could provide. This spirit is what we are there to support. Together with our international and non-governmental partners, we can help Haiti regain the path towards a better future. Long after television cameras leave, American support will remain. It stands as a promise to the people of Haiti -- and to the nations of the world -- that we will stand by our friends.

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